



Press Release

8 December 2017

For immediate release

Media statement – Whitelaw Brae Wind Farm Scottish Ministers’ decision ignores demonstrable threat to tourism employment

Mountaineering Scotland has expressed disappointment at Scottish Ministers’ consent for a generating station which would see 14-turbines with a blade height of up to 133.5 metres and 12.6km of access tracks developed on a site which would have a significant adverse visual impact on the Tweedsmuir hills.

David Gibson, CEO at Mountaineering Scotland said: “At a time when the Scottish Government is holding a public consultation about the future of planning policy, this decision demonstrates what is wrong about planning democracy in Scotland. The decision also completely ignores the negative impact the development will have on the local tourism industry.”

The application drew 84 objections, including those from Mountaineering Scotland and Scottish Borders Council, and there were no representations in favour of the development.

Mountaineering Scotland objected to the development on the grounds of adverse visual impact, and highlighted its research findings at the public inquiry which demonstrated that there is an adverse impact on tourism in areas affected by wind farms which are of interest to hillwalkers and other lovers of Scotland’s natural beauty.

Mr Gibson added: “We’re disappointed, but not surprised, that our own research into tourism impacts has been ignored consistently by developers and those who run the planning system in Scotland. But even the research promoted by the renewables industry itself now demonstrates that wind farms negatively impact tourism employment in mountain areas.”

“We have just published our analysis of Biggar Economics’ *Wind Farms and Tourism Trends in Scotland: A Research Report. October 2017*. Our report provides empirical evidence that shows tourism-related employment in scenic areas decreases after construction of wind farms, and this is based on Biggar Economics research, which is often cited by the renewables sector as evidence that the impact of wind farms is benign.”

He added “Whilst the Scottish Government and VisitScotland would have us believe that tourism in Scotland is thriving, it clearly isn’t if one looks at the facts and not the spin. The standard indicators of tourism volume in 2016, the latest available consistent data, are still below pre-2008 levels. Positive media coverage of a ‘thriving’ tourism sector, typically based on statistically selective press releases, is seldom supported by the full figures. In a competitive world, it is disingenuous to put at

risk any segment of Scotland's tourism market such as that dependent upon wild and open landscapes."

"We repeat our call to the Scottish Government that it must commission a study of wind farms, landscape quality and tourism impact from a demonstrably independent research body. Pending the outcome of this, the planning system must reset the bar for approval higher for applications for wind farms in locally designated landscape areas."

Ends

Notes for editors:

Report downloads: [Wind Farms and Tourism in Scotland: A review with a focus on mountaineering and landscape. A report by Dr David S Gordon Supplement to the above report.](#)

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About Mountaineering Scotland:

- Mountaineering Scotland is the only recognised representative organisation for hill walkers, climbers and ski-tourers who live in Scotland or who enjoy Scotland's mountains.
- Mountaineering Scotland provides training and information to mountain users to promote safety, self-reliance and the enjoyment of our mountain environment.
- The Mountaineering Scotland is a membership organisation with over 14,000 members representing hill walkers, climbers and mountaineers, funded through a combination of membership subscriptions, non-governmental grants and investment from sportscotland, which supports public initiatives and services in mountain safety, mountain training and the development and promotion of mountaineering activities.
- Mountaineering Scotland also acts for 75,000 members of the BMC or British Mountaineering Council on matters related to Landscape and Access in Scotland.
- Mountaineering Scotland landscape and access work is supported financially by the Scottish Mountaineering Trust and the BMC
- Mountaineering Scotland has launched the ClimbScotland initiative to encourage young people to participate in climbing and support their progression. It offers a dedicated website and a development team, which will introduce young people to climbing at schools, climbing walls and via youth organisations with a range of activities and events, while developing kids clubs and providing specialist support to parents, volunteers and teachers.
- Mountaineering Scotland is the national governing body for sports climbing. It offers pathways to climbing coaching, organises and promotes a range of regional and national climbing competitions, and manages the Scottish climbing and bouldering teams. It contributes to the management of the GB teams with the ultimate aim of seeing a Scottish athlete achieve a podium position in the Olympic Games.

- The MCoS is a not for profit company limited by guarantee and incorporated in Scotland. Company number SC322717.
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